

## 11. Parents and Teachers Must Set The Example

*In this worm life is transient,  
Wealth and youth are not permanent;  
Equally impermanent are wife and children;  
Only Truth and reputation are lasting.*

*Concerned only with one's good and teaching the truth,  
The preceptor may chastise or beat one,  
Like the mother who administers unpalatable medicine  
For the good of her child  
Do not forget this truth.*

*What greater gift is there than the gift of food?  
What greater deity is there than one's parents ?  
What greater morality is there than promoting the public good?*

*What righteousness can excel more than compassion ?  
Is there any gain superior to the company of the good?*

*Is there any disability worse than enmity ?  
Is there any death on earth worse than infamy?  
Is there anything more valuable than lasting fame ?  
Can anything be more sustaining than remembrance of the Lord?  
Is there a heaven higher than inner joy ?*

Embodiments of the Divine *Aatma!* If children are to be persons of good character, adhering to good practices, the parents should be of good character and exemplary conduct.

The great teacher, Adi Sankaracharya, was the child of parents who were highly virtuous and noble in their conduct. For the great name attained by Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, the credit goes to their parents. Many great men achieved name and fame by following in the footsteps of their parents.

### **A lesson Gandhi learnt as a boy**

If Gandhi, who was an ordinary person, was able to achieve greatness and world renown, it was because of the lessons in good behaviour which he learnt from his mother. The mother used to

observe a vow: she would take her food only after the cuckoo sang in the morning. Once when Gandhi was a boy, the mother was waiting for a long time to hear the call of the cuckoo. Observing this, Gandhi went out of the house, imitated the call of the cuckoo and came in and told his mother that the cuckoo had sung and that she could take her food. The mother, who saw through her son's trickery, slapped him on the cheek and said, "You wicked fellow; what sin must I have committed to bear a son like you?" She felt sad that such a child should have been born to her. Her grief touched the heart of Gandhi. From that moment Gandhi took a firm resolve never to utter a lie again.

In his childhood, Gandhi used to be full of fear. There was a maid in his home called Rambha. Gandhi disclosed to her how he was always afraid. Rambha told him: "Child, always recite the name of Rama. By chanting Rama's name, your fear will go away." From that time Gandhi was always chanting the name of Rama. The habit of reciting Rama's name, which began in his boyhood, continued right up to the moment of his passing. Nor was that all. By adhering to the chanting of Rama's name, Gandhiji was able to achieve his aim of winning the country's freedom by non-violent means. For such a life of purity and virtue, the parents were primarily responsible.

#### **Today parents themselves lack refined qualities**

Unfortunately, today, because the parents themselves have no purity of character and lack refined qualities, and do not lead regulated lives, evil practices and wickedness are growing all over the world. When the parents get up from their beds abusing each other, their children get up assailing each other. Because of the malefic effects of the *Kali* age, parents tend to be quarrelsome. Fathers are behaving like Hiranya Kashyapa. Because of such parents, Bharath is witnessing the spread of unrighteousness and evil practices.

In days of yore the people of Bharath earned name and fame by leading virtuous and sacred lives and were an example to the world. The children of today take after their parents. The tree is based on the seed and the seed determines the nature of the tree. For the evil ways and bad behaviour of children today, the parents alone are to be blamed. Few parents choose to tell their children to speak the truth, to act righteously and earn a good name. Because of such bad parents, the nation is forfeiting its good name. It is better that such children are not born at all. They are a disgrace to their parents and to their country. Their education and their jobs may help to bring to them power, position and wealth but do not serve to promote in them such virtues as compassion, kindness and sacrifice. All their acquisitions have no permanence.

Whatever strength one may possess, without the strength of the Divine, he is a weakling. What happened to a valiant person like Kama? He had physical prowess, intellectual abilities and great scholarship but lacking Divine support, he met with a pitiable end.

#### **Teachers' failure to teach the right path**

For all the ills with which the nation is afflicted today, the parents and teachers are responsible. The teachers do not punish the students (for their lapses). Because the students are not punished for their mistakes, they behave as they please. The teachers are responsible for the sins of the students. They do not teach the students the right path. They transmit only book knowledge, but do not teach fight knowledge, wise living and higher values. If there are no morals and no human values, a man becomes a demon.

Only he is a real man who harmonises in his life the body, the mind and the *Aatma*. A life based on the body and the senses is an animal existence. One who is totally dominated by the thoughts

and fancies of the mind is a demon. One who ignores the calls of the body and the mind and follows the call of the Spirit is Divine. The animal, the demonic and the Divine possibilities are immanent in the human condition. Hence, one who values only the body and follows the inclinations of the senses is comparable to an animal. In a sense, the animal may be considered superior to such a man because it has "a season and a reason" for its behaviour. But one having the human form, who craves for sensuous pleasures alone, is worse than an animal.

### **Character is more important than wealth**

Even for these three kinds of behaviour, the parents and teachers are responsible. They are responsible for the good or bad conduct of the students. It is the parents who lead children to the highest levels or cause their fall to the lowest depths.

Parents are concerned solely about the material welfare of their children and have no concern for their moral and spiritual well-being. When a child is born, the parents desire that he should be educated, sent abroad, encouraged to make as much money as possible there by whatever means. This is all that they teach their children. People today earn money in so many different ways, from begging to dacoity. It is not wealth that is important. Character is primary. Parents do not teach the children to cultivate good qualities. They do not control children who go astray. They condone the lapses of the children and often encourage them in their bad habits. They are encouraged in their wrong ways even as Duryodhana was encouraged by his father, Dhritrashtra. It is because of such parents that the children today take to wrong courses.

Dhritrashtra was not only physically blind, but lacked also the eyes of wisdom. He was totally blind. Parents today are tending to be equally blind. They don't correct the mistakes of their children or chastise them. They are afraid that the children might run away and commit suicide. Parents have the right to warn and correct their children. Why should they be afraid to do so? What does it matter what happens to such wicked children? Instead of being a running sore for the parents, it is better they are no more. Death is preferable to infamy. Nor is there greater wealth than fame. Better to have a renowned son who is short-lived than an infamous son with long life.

### **Ensure world peace by winning God's love**

The foremost thing which man has to acquire today is God's love. This love will secure world peace, peace in society and peace in the home. Through the individual's love and morality, there will be peace and security in the home. By individuals winning the love of God, society secures peace and order. When the people have got the love of God, the world as a whole enjoys peace and happiness.

Happiness and peace are not to be found in wealth, position or power. All these generate only fear and anxiety and not peace and happiness. Today, even highly educated persons do not recognise this truth, pose as devotees, but follow the examples of their parents. Hiranya Kashyapa tried all methods to divert his son, Prahlada, from devotion to God. The child was subjected to every conceivable kind of torture and ordeal: trampling by elephants, biting by cobras and immersion in the sea. But Prahlada's devotion to the Lord saved him. Disregarding his perverse father, Prahlada held fast to the Lord.

### **Noble and Divine feelings are absent today**

There is nothing great about being a father. No father can rejoice merely when a son is born. Only when the people praise the virtues of the son will the father rejoice over his birth. A

righteous son redeems himself and his family. Verily, they alone are fit to be called parents who bring up such virtuous children.

Prahlada declared, "He alone is a father who tells his son: Child, realise God. He is a true *Guru* who leads the disciple to God." Such teachers and parents have become rare these days. All that had brought fame and glory to the country in the past has become a waste because of the decline of moral values and behaviour. The educational system is utterly vitiated. There is no attempt to promote human qualities. Noble and Divine feelings are absent. It is utterly unbecoming of those who call themselves human beings to behave like animals with no devotion to God.

What does the word "Bhagavan" mean? It is not a nominal title. "*Brahmethi, Paramaatmethi, Bhaga Ithi Sah,*" says the Veda. That is, Bhagavan is the One who is the Supreme Absolute and Over-Soul. The word *Bhaga* means *Sambhartha* and *Bhartha*. *Sambhartha* is one who is responsible for creation of the cosmos. *Bhartha* refers to one who sustains and protects the cosmos. This means that Bhagavan is One who has the power of creation and protection. "*Bha*" means *kaanthi* (effulgence) and *Shanthi* (peace). "*Ga*" means one who is all-pervading, "*vaan*" means the one who has the capacity. Thus, "Bhagavan" refers to one who illumines and confers peace on the universe.

Man today does not seek to comprehend the inner meaning of Divinity. There is nothing in this world apart from the Divine. All that is seen in the phenomenal world is permeated by the Divine. The egoistic conceit of man, which makes him feel that he is the doer and enjoyer, is the cause of his ruin. This egoism has to be routed out. Man must seek to manifest his divinity. Only then can peace and security be established in the world.

### **Responsibility of parents towards children**

Every effort has to be made to experience Divine love and purity. One who has secured love can accomplish anything. Nothing is beyond his reach. Hence, one should be worthy of God's grace. Without Divine grace, man is no more than an animal. Man should strive to control his senses, develop good qualities and lead an ideal life. Parents are primarily responsible for bringing up children who will lead such ideal lives. · Therefore, they have to reform themselves.

Today parents all over the country are worried about the conduct of their children and are not at all happy. They lament about the behaviour of their children, but do not realise that they are themselves to be blamed. If the parents had brought up the children on right lines, would they go astray? Pampering the children in various ways, they are allowed to go about like street dogs. How can such boys be reformed? It is impossible. When wealth grows, arrogance increases and morality declines.

Men should realise that without God's love, human existence is utterly valueless. A bird like Jatayu earned God's grace. A simple old woman like Sabari won God's love. But men today, despite their scholarship and scientific knowledge, are making no attempts to secure God's love. What is the use of this education or science? True science should serve to promote the progress of the nation. But today, in the name of science, the world is being destroyed.

Education should not breed a class of parasites, who exploit others. It should help to promote good qualities.

### **Victory can be won only with God's grace**

Students should remember that this country was known in the past as a land where people led truthful and righteous lives. Krishna told Arjuna that he should consider God and *Dharma* (Righteousness) as most important. Because the Pandavas adhered to Righteousness and had firm faith in God, they could ultimately enjoy all prosperity and happiness. Because of their love for God, they could bear with fortitude all troubles and difficulties. What was the fate of the Kauravas who ignored God? Not one of Dhritharashtra's hundred sons survived. Despite all the resources they had and the valiant commanders who were on their side, God was not on their side.

True victory can be won only by God's grace. Students! Strive for securing the love of God. Today, love is being misused for satisfying the senses, with deplorable results. (Swami related the dialogue between Yajnavalkya and his wife, Maithreyee, over attachment to the things of the world and pointed out how Maithreyee was as ready to give up worldly possessions as the sage himself).

Today, such couples are rare. There must be such couples who will give birth to virtuous children. Only virtuous children can bring a good name to the country.

Of what use is a son who does not use his hands to perform good deeds, who does not use his tongue to utter the Lord's name and who does not cherish in his mind truth and compassion? This is the triple purity that makes human life sublime.

Students should dedicate their lives to the service of others. Cultivate love. Remember the great mothers in the past who gave to the world *Avatars* from time to time. What is the inner significance of observing today as Mother's day? It means that women should become such great mothers. The fathers should be exemplary in their conduct. When the fathers are not setting the right example, the children should be such as to have the courage to correct the parents. But unfortunately there are neither exemplary parents nor exemplary children.

Students! Fill your hearts with love.

*Kalyana Mandap, Brindavan, 6 May 1992*

*I am always emphasising the value of Service as a Sadhana for realising the Oneness of all in God and the oneness of one's self with God. I do not recommend the giving up of Karma, for it is not possible. What is generally meant by Karmasanyas is the giving up of rites and rituals prescribed by the Scriptures. I call upon you to adhere to a new rite, Seva a new Yaga, Sacrifice of the Ego, a new ritual of worship, Saranagathi, dedication of all thoughts, words and deeds at the Lotus Feet of the Lord and acceptance of all that happens as Grace from Him*

*Sathya Sai Baba*